

# **FINAL REPORT**

**Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program  
Contract Number: DACW  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Galveston District**

**Maintenance Dredging  
Brownsville, Texas  
Brazos Santiago Pass**

**Dates:**

**9 March 2002 – 20 March 2002**

**Submitted by:**

**Will Parks  
Biologist / Senior Project Manager  
Marine Endangered Species Observer**

***Remsa, Inc.*  
4440 B Kecoughtan Rd  
Hampton, VA 23669  
(757) 723-2930**

## ABSTRACT

A twenty four-hour-a-day marine endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredge *BE Lindholm* during the Brownsville, Texas maintenance dredging project from 9 March through 20 March 2002. Endangered and threatened sea turtles were the species targeted. A total of 4 incidents were recorded in which all/or parts of these species were found. The take limit of 2 green turtles was compromised on 19 March, which resulted in consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service and the US Army Corps of Engineers. As a result, dredging activities were terminated on 20 March.

## INTRODUCTION

The observer program to monitor the impact of dredging on endangered species in the area of dredge operations was conducted in response to US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) maintenance dredging project in Brownsville, TX. Pursuant to agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), two certified observers were required onboard during the months of prime sea turtle activity for that area to document any detected incidents involving target species. This window was defined in the "National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion on the impacts of the Army Corps of Engineers hopper dredging in the Galveston District.

## SCOPE OF WORK

*REMSA, Inc.* was subcontracted by Weeks Marine to conduct the observer program for the project. *REMSA* was to provide the necessary trained personnel and equipment to clean and monitor inflow screens onboard the hopper dredge *BE Lindholm* and to provide the necessary reports. Monitoring was to be performed 24 hours each day from 9 March until completion. Observers were to inspect and clean all inflow and overflow screens, and to inspect both dragheads each time they were brought on deck for cleaning and maintenance. Any death or injury involving target species required the evidence to be identified, logged, measured, and photographed. Disposal of any animals recovered was to be the responsibility of the observer and dredge personnel. Target species included the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). A

load sheet was to be completed for each load whether or not turtle parts were found. In the case of an incident involving a sea turtle, an incident report form was to be completed. These forms were to be provided by the dredging contractor. A daylight bridge watch was to be conducted during periods when the observer was not occupied with screen cleaning duties. Observers were to be certain that dredge crew personnel were aware of the need to avoid incidents involving any endangered animal, and that civil and criminal penalties are possible for harming or harassing endangered species.

## **METHODS**

Dredging by the hopper dredge *BE Lindholm* in Brazos Santiago Pass began when both observers arrived onboard on 9 March 2002. Names and addresses of observers are furnished in the Appendix.

The *BE Lindholm* functioned with 100% inflow screening with sea turtle draghead deflectors being used. The screening baskets were fitted with 4" x 4" screening material to insure that and parts of the targeted species would not be allowed to flow through into the hopper. All dragheads and screening baskets were checked after each load and the appropriate form was filled out.

A bridge lookout was maintained during those daylight hours that the observer was not on deck checking screens and was on duty.

## RESULTS

### Take 1



Date: 3/18/02

Time: 1320

Load 44 BE Lindholm

Species: *Chelonia mydas*

### Take 2



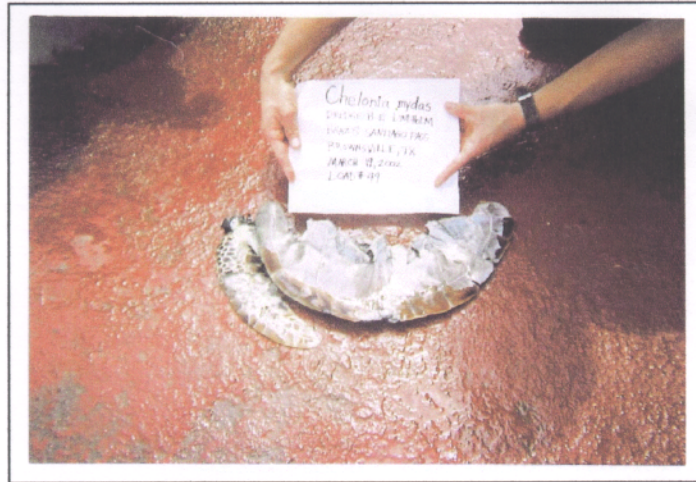
Date: 3/19/02

Time: 0012

Load 48 BE Lindholm

Species: *Chelonia mydas*

### Take 3



Date: 3/19/02  
Time: 0255  
Load 49 BE Lindholm  
Species: Chelonia mydas

### Take 4

Picture Overexposed

Date: 3/19/02  
Time: 1753  
Load 54 BE Lindholm  
Species: Chelonia mydas

## DISCUSSION

The Brownsville, TX dredging project in Brazos Santiago Pass resulted in 4 separate sea turtle incidents. It was found that three of these incidents involved the same turtle in Loads 44, 48, and 54. All incidents were reported to be fresh. The observers were accurately able to match up the specimens and conclude that they were in fact from the same turtle. The second turtle was taken in Load 49 and was deemed to be fresh by the observer. Proper incident reports were completed and faxed to NMFS.

After NMFS received the information of the second take involving a green turtle, action was taken and dredging was terminated.

It was also brought to my attention that the Dredge Liberty Island was also working in the Galveston District at the time. This project reported 3 incidents involving green sea turtles, which made a total of 5 turtle takes for the district. This also played a large role in the decision to terminate dredging in the district until further notice.

If there are any questions regarding this report please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Will Parks  
Senior Project Manager / Biologist  
*REMSA, Inc.*  
4330 B Kecoughtan Rd.  
Hampton, VA 23669  
(757) 723-2930

## **LIST OF OBSERVERS**

Gary Sundin  
724 Strickland Circle  
Colbert, GA 30628

Tara Fitzpatrick  
1641 Stadium Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10465